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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 001141

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KNNC](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES AHMADINEJAD  
VISIT, ENERGY, AND OSCE HDIM

REF: A. STATE 126089

[1](#)B. BAKU 01072

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Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. During a September 11 meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov said Iran increasingly supports Iraq's territorial integrity, but President Ahmadinejad will not change his position on Iran's nuclear program. During President Ahmadinejad's August visit to Baku, the Iranian side raised their "concern" with U.S.-Russian negotiations over Gabala. (According to the Turkish Ambassador here, Ahmadinejad was very harsh with Aliyev on Gabala.) Mammadyarov explained that Iran's support for Azerbaijan's position on Nagorno-Karabakh during the visit was not a significant shift in substance, but Iran did agree, for the first time, to put it in writing in the joint declaration. On energy issues, Mammadyarov said Kazakh President Nazarbayev will meet Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov on September 13 and would discuss a possible trilateral energy summit between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Mammadyarov said he did not have any problems with the U.S.' NGO principles, which we proposed to the GOAJ to endorse before the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, but said it was impossible for Azerbaijan to release the seven journalists prior to the meeting. Mammadyarov confirmed that he will lead the GOAJ delegation to UNGA and President Aliyev and the Azerbaijani First Lady will not attend. End Summary.

Iran Tidbits  
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[1](#)2. (C) Commenting on Iranian President Ahmadinejad's August 21-22 visit to Baku, Mammadyarov said Iran has "strongly changed" its policy on Iraq and it now supports Iraq's territorial integrity. Tehran increasingly understands that Iraq's dissolution is not in Iran's interests, Mammadyarov observed. (Mammadyarov suggested that Damascus influenced Tehran's more supportive stance concerning Iraq's territorial integrity.) Mammadyarov regarded Muqtada al-Sadr's willingness to work with the Iraqi government as a signal of this Iranian policy shift. Mammadyarov also noted that Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki "highly assessed" the U.S.-Iran talks, saying there was a "good atmosphere."

[1](#)3. (C) In Mammadyarov's personal opinion, Ahmadinejad's

personal position on Iran's nuclear program will not change because his legitimacy is closely wed to this issue, and as Ahmadinejad has said, "he burned his bridges" on the issue. Mammadyarov suggested that other Iranian elites may not be so inflexible. Mammadyarov observed that the Azerbaijani Embassy in Iran has reported increased discussions among the Iranian elite in the past six months, some of whom are questioning Ahmadinejad's more confrontational policies.

¶4. (C) Ahmadinejad raised concerns with U.S.-Russian discussions on Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station, obliquely warning the GOAJ not to do anything that would hurt their "brothers in Iran." One of the Iranian Deputy Foreign Ministers also told Mammadyarov that Tehran understands Azerbaijan is an independent state, while asking for Azerbaijan to maintain a balanced foreign policy. In response to the Ambassador's question, Mammadyarov said the GOAJ did not raise the issue of Iranian incursions onto Azerbaijani territory because this trend shows a decline and Azerbaijan is increasing its own capabilities. Mammadyarov also confirmed that there was no change in the visa regime policy between the two countries as a result of the visit.

¶5. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question about the inclusion of Iran's support for Azerbaijan's position on NK in the joint Azerbaijani-Iranian declaration, Mammadyarov said this was not a significant shift in substance. (NOTE: Per ref A, Azerbaijan and Iran signed five agreements during Ahmadinejad's August 21-22 visit to Baku, including a joint declaration.) However, Mammadyarov said while Iran publicly has supported Azerbaijan's NK position in the past, the GOAJ secured Iran's support in a written declaration for the first time. The GOAJ had not planned to issue such a declaration on the occasion of the visit, but agreed when Iran offered to include the statement on NK. Mammadyarov suggested that Iran offered this support because Ahmadinejad is looking for

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politicalsupport for his regime.

¶6. (C) Mammadyarov hoped Iran would adopt a more flexible position during the mid-October Heads of State summit for the Caspian littoral countries in Tehran. He noted that Kazakh President Nazarbayev will visit Tehran on October 15, and Russian President Putin will visit Tehran on October 17. Given that the other Caspian leaders have agreed to the summit, President Aliyev also will attend this summit.

#### Energy Update

¶7. (C) Mammadyarov said Kazakh President Nazarbayev will meet Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov on September 13, and said the Kazakh Ambassador confirmed Nazarbayev will raise the issue of the trilateral Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan energy summit. Nazarbayev wants to host a trilateral summit because he seeks to be "the senior Central Asian leader," according to Mammadyarov. Mammadyarov pledged to share any information he receives on Nazarbayev's visit or a possible trilateral summit.

¶8. (C) Mammadyarov complained that the EU has failed to engage substantively with Azerbaijan on energy, even though he has raised this issue with EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Mammadyarov said he looks forward to the upcoming energy conference in Lithuania, although the outcome is still unclear. Looking to the future, Mammadyarov said the GOAJ supports the idea of a heads of state conference with the EU focused on energy, possibly timed to the 10th anniversary of TRACECA in 2008. He strongly argued that EU Commission President Barroso needs to be more personally, visibly, and actively engaged.

Open to GOAJ Participation at OSCE HDIM

¶9. (C) Ambassador delivered ref B demarche on the September 24 - October 5 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) meeting in Warsaw, highlighting this as an opportunity for the GOAJ to send a positive signal on democracy-related issues. She suggested that specific steps as proposed in the demarche, accompanied by a strong public affirmations of Azerbaijan's commitment to democratization, would be important in light of recent negative developments here.

¶10. (C) The Ambassador reminded Mammadyarov of A/S Fried's recent comments that Azerbaijan needs to make equal progress on our three core bilateral interests and underscored the growing perception of democratic backsliding in Azerbaijan. Mammadyarov read through the demarche carefully and said the request to release seven journalists before the HDIM was "impossible" because it would create the perception that Azerbaijan is caving into international pressure. Mammadyarov also took issue with the demarche's final point on working with international legal experts on trial monitoring, observing that this should not be particularized to the Farhad Aliyev trial, which the Armenia lobby has been using to give Azerbaijan a bad reputation. Mammadyarov, however, agreed to the general principle of trial monitoring.

¶11. (C) On the 2008 Presidential election, Mammadyarov said negotiations over the Council of Europe's (COE) Venice Commission's recommendations still are ongoing between the GOAJ and the COE. Mammadyarov sighed and obliquely blamed unspecified GOAJ officials for having the wrong "mentality" toward the elections.

¶12. (C) On civil society, the Ambassador suggested that it would be helpful for President Aliyev to endorse the Secretary's Guiding Principles on NGOs, Mammadyarov,

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recalling that A/S Lowenkron had made the same request in March, said he would reexamine these principles; he thought the GOAJ could support them. The Ambassador noted that the implementation of President Aliyev's July 27 decree on NGOs was very important, as this could be a positive or troubling development depending on whether the decree in practice supports civil society development or attempts to control NGO activity. Mammadyarov agreed that how the decree is implemented is central.

¶13. (C) As an aside on OSCE-related issues, Mammadyarov said

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the GOAJ supports Kazakhstan's bid for the OSCE chairmanship.

He warned that if the U.S. does not support Kazakhstan's bid, Russia likely will use this U.S. position to block all candidates for OSCE positions.

UNGA Bilateral

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¶14. (C) Mammadyarov said he will lead the GOAJ delegation to UNGA, arriving September 26 and departing for Baku on October

¶13. Mammadyarov said he would be happy to discuss the full range of bilateral issues with U.S. officials, but especially energy. The Ambassador underscored the importance of continuing the democracy dialogue and intensifying it when A/S Lowenkron's successor is named. Mammadyarov agreed but recalled the understanding at its launch that it would not be formalized, "like the energy dialogue, under an MOU."

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